

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

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FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

EB DOCKET NO. 01-66

June 7, 2001

The Honorable Michael Powell
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, D.C. 20554

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Dear Chairman Powell:

We understand that on March 20th, the Federal Communications Commission announced it would adopt a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) FCC 01-88 seeking comment on amendments to the Part 11 Rules governing the Emergency Alert System (EAS) requested by the National Weather Service and the Society of Broadcast Engineers. Included in this NPRM is an invitation for comment on requests that the Commission amend Part 11 to amend the list of state and local EAS event codes to add new event codes for emergency conditions not currently addressed, including a "Missing Child" code.

As you may know, the EAS is being used around the country as a means of alerting the community to the most serious child abduction cases. This program, called the "AMBER Plan: America's Missing Broadcast Emergency Response", was established five years ago in memory of Amber Hagerman, who was abducted and murdered in Arlington, Texas. Currently, there are 22 established emergency alert plans nationwide on the local, regional and state level. Fifteen of these plans use the EAS. Already the Plan has been responsible for the amazing recovery of at least 15 children.

While we are extremely pleased that the FCC has recommended the Missing Child code, we respectfully request that the code be amended to reflect the alert as an "Abducted" rather than a "Missing" Child Statement. This distinction is critical since the AMBER Plan is decidedly not used for missing children cases, including runaways and parental abductions, unless the child is in a life-threatening situation. The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children believes that a "Missing Child Statement" will misrepresent the purpose of the AMBER Plan. It will also lead to overuse of the EAS, thereby numbing the public to this valuable national system and damaging the Plan's credibility.

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We wholeheartedly endorse the use of the EAS to activate the AMBER Plan as its purpose is to provide the public with timely emergency information. Statistics show that the first few hours of a child abduction are critical to the outcome of the case. According to a study by the United States Department of Justice, about 75 percent of the children who are kidnapped and later found murdered were killed within the first three hours after being taken.


When every minute counts, the EAS has the capability to issue an immediate "call to action" to the community to assist in the search for the child and the suspect. The system delivers vital information quickly and simultaneously to broadcasters. There is never a concern that an urgent bulletin is sitting on a broadcaster's fax machine or in an unread e-mail because every station is required by the FCC to participate in the Emergency Alert System. Moreover, each station must have an approved, fully operational EAS encoder/decoder for sending and receiving emergency information.

The Federal Communications Commission states the EAS is used to transmit "Life Saving Messages" to the nation or to the public in their state or local areas. A serious child abduction can be a life and death situation. If a community is slow to act, a child may not come home safely. If the child is never found or discovered murdered and the suspect is not apprehended, then the entire community remains at risk.

Time is critical when a community is trying to mobilize a rapid response to an abducted child case. That's why the EAS is the most efficient and reliable vehicle for activating the AMBER Plan. Today, one out of seven children is recovered as a direct result of someone in the general public recognizing their picture and notifying authorities. Establishing an "Abducted Child" Statement to trigger the EAS will instantly galvanize communities to take a proactive role in protecting their children.

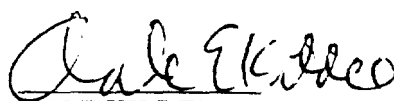
Sincerely,



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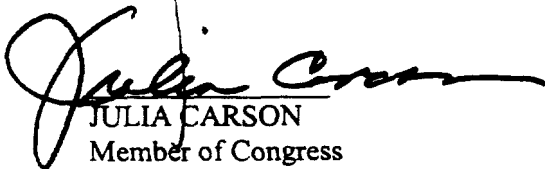
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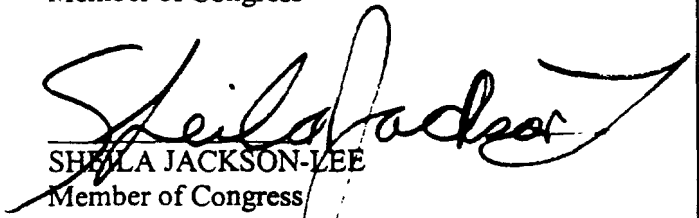
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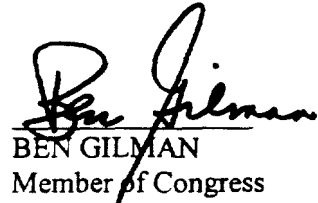
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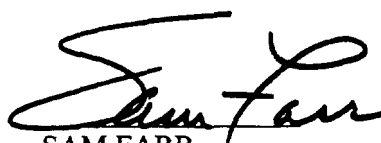
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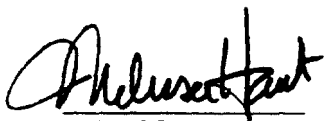
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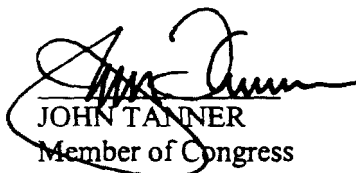
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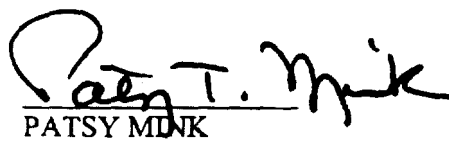
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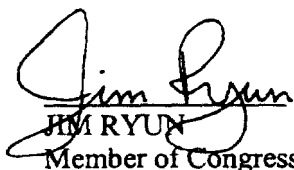
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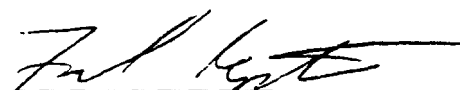
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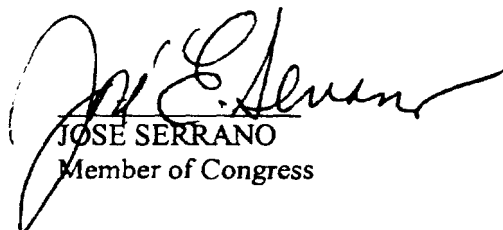
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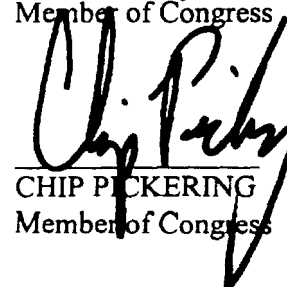
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